

Paws to Dance

The Newsletter of the Canine Freestyle Federation, Inc.
November, 2003



THE UNSUNG HERO BY ELAINE SMITH

Every great group has those who have inspired them to be great. An individual who has caused them to shed a tear of hope, someone who shows them something that they had never believed to be possible. In war, there are many unsung heroes. Individuals who made such significant contributions to the success of the group, that they were truly priceless. Our group, First Florida Freestyler's Guild, had such an individual. Our unsung hero. Some of you may remember her from the retreat. She was "That truly amazing Rottweiler." Those of us who knew her as a close friend saw a sparkle in her brown eyes and wide grin that we will never forget. Her name was Grail and she belonged to an equally exceptional lady whose name is Gaea Mitchel. As I write this dedication, I remember the first time I met Grail and Gaea. Joan had come to Florida to introduce us to freestyle. I had been eagerly awaiting this event for what felt like an eternity. Joan had explained the magic of freestyle on the phone, but it really didn't make sense until I experienced it. There were about twenty of us that day, and we all experienced it, not through our



own dogs, but through the warm brown eyes of Grail. She could have sold even the most skeptical a person. And she did. There were more people joining CFF from that seminar than any other done before that. It was Grail's joy that sold us. That incredible dog gave us a glimpse of the magic of

freestyle and we wanted more. If you find yourself wiping away a shed tear from your brow, you are not alone. Many tears will go into this piece before it is over. Grail was made for freestyle. Tragically, she was taken from us far too early. She had a rare stomach disorder, that despite Gaea's efforts, it worsen and finally took her life at only 6 years old. I try not to feel anger as I think about how unfair it seems. Though she never was able to compete in freestyle, she made a lasting impression on all of us. To Grail, our unsung hero, may we see you again someday on the other side of the rainbow.



From Your President

Guild News—Staccato Notes

Hi everyone! My name is Jeanine Johnson Brown and I am the new Guild Chair.

Just a little about my background... I live in Durham, North Carolina, although I grew up in Iowa (Forest City). My husband and I have 3 dogs, 1 Brittany and 2 Field Pointers. I have been on the Board of CFF for about 2 years and have been a member of CFF for about 5 years.

My full time job is with Glaxo Smith Kline (Project Planning). I am a member of the Animal Protection Society of Orange County Dog Training Program and a member of Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT).

My colleague, Barbara Long and I co-direct the APS Drill Team, a freestyle team of about 8-10 members. We march in parades and do somewhere around 5 to 8 freestyle demos a year at various functions in Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, and surrounding areas. We also compete at CFF competitions. Our group has been together for about 4 years. In addition, I show my Brittany in freestyle, and have done some freestyle work with my Pointer. Finally, my Pointer and I have just been certified through Delta Society.

I look forward to meeting and talking to each of you. Please do not hesitate to contact me at anytime!

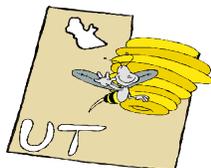
Misha Guild Utah,

The Misha Guild has had several demos lately. We did a demo at a pet workshop at Weber State University for the whole community. We performed after the search and rescue presentation and before the therapy dog presentation. The therapy dog leader asked us to leave on the music during their program because "the audience seemed to respond to it."

Then we performed at a senior center and had a very receptive audience.

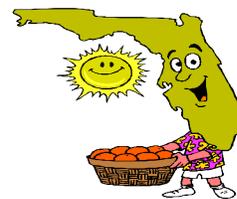
One of the elder gentlemen said, "You know, the music seemed to fit each dog." Our last demo was at the Pet Expo in Salt Lake City and drew our biggest audience. We performed Saturday afternoon and on Sunday, many were asking when we were going to perform that day. Unfortunately, we were only asked to perform the one day. I think we made a positive impression on those who were there. I hope some interest in CFF was sparked. No one that we performed for had ever heard of freestyle (we are still in a vacuum out here). We are currently looking for other demos to help spread the word that there is a wonderful thing called Canine Freestyle.

Well, that is the news from our little group in Utah.



FRIST FLORIDA FREESTYLERS GUILD

The fall has gone by very quickly for the FFF Guild and we are deep into preparations for our first trial to be held on Valentine's Day, Saturday, Feb. 14, 2004. We knew we were taking on a big project, but over the past months, the enormity has sunk in. As a guild, we felt we had a responsibility to raise funds to cover as much as possible of the expense of a trial. Raising money in this economic period has been a big challenge. It has really made us appreciate what CFF has done to fund the organization over the years. We started with a zero bank balance in May. Most of the money has come in small amounts requiring all of us to contribute items for resale in silent auctions, staff sales tables at local dog shows, and work very hard for what we got. Our most effective money raiser has been the doggy theme twin size quilt that we are raffling off. Even that has required an all out push from everyone to sell raffle tickets. Our thanks go to all CFF members who have purchased tickets and supported us in this effort. The winning ticket will be drawn at our November 22nd Guild meeting in Gainesville. The lucky winner will be the envy of us all! Please know that in return for your support, the FFF Guild will do their part to help other guilds in their fundraising efforts.



With fundraising now behind us, we are about to plunge into the mechanics of putting on a trial. Yes, at times we start to feel a little panic! (Make that a lot of panic!!!) It seems there are so many jobs to do and so few of us and the deadline is coming so fast! It will be a big learning experience! Carl and Joan keep telling us to take it one step at a time and we will pull it off. We have found a show site, selected our judges, found a Trial Secretary, and are finalizing plans. The show has been our dream since we became a guild. It has taught us to work together, helped us know one another better, and given us a feeling of accomplishment. We know we have to depend on one another and be there for each other.

All work and no play would leave us in a sad condition. Our monthly guild meetings continue to be the reward and positive reinforcement that we all require. Training Director, Elaine Smith always manages to come up with an interesting class and fun group exercises that give us an opportunity to improve our skills and learn new ones. Over the past few months we have worked on cues to regain the attention of our dog, exercises to help the dog find "heel" and "side" positions, teaching a moving sit and down, teaching "charge" to change pace and motivate the dog. For many of us, this class is our only opportunity to work, train, and learn from other freestylers. Guild business is discussed over lunch, sometimes a pot-luck affair other times a quick sandwich. The afternoon is the highlight of our day. As a group, we help each other with our routines, music selection, choreography, timing, and run-throughs. Each member brings their strengths and skills and shares freely. It is so exciting to see the routines take shape and the teams grow in skill and confidence. We leave to go our separate ways at the end of the day, inspired to work harder, practice more, polish that routine before the next get-together.

Ann Holder

Guild News

More Staccato Notes

Dances with Woofs, South Dakota

Rapid City SD Hosts 1st Freestyle Trial

The Rapid City Freestyle Guild "Dances With Woofs" hosted its first freestyle trial at the Happy Tails Dog Training Center in Rapid City. A day and a half of seminar followed the competition with judges Joan Tennille and Kay Richards. Dances With Woofs is a small but dynamic group as was demonstrated in the competition. Our first try at this was an overwhelming success.

It was quite a day. There were 12 dogs entered, a small group but one that seemed full of magic on this historic day. There were dogs entered at each level and one team competing at Level II.

Three dogs entered at Level I with Kay Bedeau and her Irish Setter "Julia" taking first place honors.

Five dogs entered at Level II and Karen Benzon with her Doberman "Draca" walking (or is that dancing) away with first place. Three dogs in Level II got new titles, Karen and "Draca", Debbie Davenport and her English Springer Spaniel "Dazzle", and Dawn Madge with her Dachshund, "Danny".

The highlight of the day was the two dogs in Level II team. Karen Benzon with her Doberman "Cirrus" and Kay Bedeau with her Irish Setter "Ice" worked to the theme from the Pink Panther. Joan Tennille said while presenting their title ribbons that she didn't think she would ever see a team succeed in this sport. "Cirrus" and "Ice" brought tears to her eyes. Rapid City, South Dakota has the honor of getting the 1st ever team placement, at any level. The possibility seemed so remote to Joan that she didn't even bring the right ribbons with her. Neither Karen nor Kay seemed upset that they would have to wait for their prizes to be delivered via mail.

Four dogs were showcased at Level III. Dawn Madge and her Dachshund, "Holly" not only carted off the 1st place ribbon but took home a new title, and the prizes for highest artistic and technical along with highest score in Level III. The crowd assembled cheered Dawn's accomplishments, which were especially sweet since Dawn is the force behind Freestyle in Rapid City. Dawn teaches the classes that most of the rest of the Guild members take. She works tirelessly to help pick music, and to choreograph routines, sometimes adjusting weekly! Karen Benzon and her Doberman "Cirrus"

The rest of the weekend was spent learning more tricks of the trade from Joan and Kay. The afternoon of the 1st was spent going over the routines from the trial, getting helpful hints from the judges and learning new things, like how to run backwards – and not get a concussion! No dogs worked the last four hours; it was time for the handlers to learn to move without the dogs.

November 2nd was more learning and more interaction between judges and handlers and handlers and their dogs. Dogs worked with their handlers while Joan and Kay tossed out suggestions for things to try (and not to ever do again). All in all, it was a successful weekend. The members of the Guild feel like they had a successful trial and are planning on next year.

The Gold Coast *Freestyle Guild* has had an



action packed Summer! Our goal has been to expose the public and dog world to the art and sport of canine freestyle. Our Summer began with the Future Farmer's Parade in Healdsburg (Wine Country), demos at a "Mutt Strutt" in Hayward, benefit for Tony LaRussa's Animal Rescue Foundation in the San Francisco East Bay, golden Retriever Rescue in the North Bay, "Pooch PowWow" in Fremont (South Bay), and finished up the Summer with a demo at the Sonoma Humane Society Pet Expo in the North Bay.

The Guild was invited as guest performers at the very respected "Dressage in the Wine Country". 11 dog teams participated, and every dog exceeded my expectations! Even those that I expected to "freeze" or "retreat" stepped up the plate and amazed me! The Sonoma County division of our Guild opened the performance with a group routine consisting of 6 teams. Two of the teams from this group jumped in to add numbers to our East Bay division for a second group routine of 5 teams featuring solo spots by Terri Prince and her golden retriever "Buttercup" and Karen Jackson and her golden "Mattie". Among the outstanding solo routines that evening were Laurie Rubin and "Luna" (OTCH Australian shepherd), Nacina Dawn and her amazing golden retriever "Candy", Joy Mueller, DVM and her Australian Shepherd "Bodie", Kathleen Hinds and her graceful borzoi "Talea", Laurel Putnam and her flashy smooth coat collies "Scout" and Tyson", Anna Sowik and her Certified Therapy Dog "Hufflepuff", Lori Jackson and her athletic black lab "Darcy" and Ellen Perlson and her well known corgi "Tag". Of the 11 teams that participated, 8 are currently CFF members with another sending in her application in a few weeks. Fall I will be focusing on growing the Sacramento area.

Judy Gamet

CFF's Twelfth Show *hosted by*

First Florida Freestylers Guild
Saturday, February 14, 2004

at

K-9 Obedience Club of Jacksonville
2638 Powers Ave.

Jacksonville, FL 32207-8004

For Premium contact: Laurie Billinge,
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6642 Wellington Place Lane
Jacksonville, FL 32216

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A Year in the Life continued from August News-letter...by Betty Swenson

We were now at the end of July. After two weeks of fast walking, we added two five-minute intervals of trotting into each 30-minute session. The time spent trotting was increased, and that spent walking was decreased, by two minutes every five days. We had another visit to VetHab, and wheelbarrowing (walking on front legs with me holding up the rear), backing, laterals, and carrying a one pound retrieving bumper for five minutes twice daily were added to Gromit's program. All this was to build different muscle groups and avoid future injury. *Again, our previous training in obedience, agility and freestyle made all these exercises (except wheelbarrow, which he hated) fairly easy.

By the end of August, we had worked up to a total of 23 minutes of trotting during our 30 -minute 'walks'. Then one morning, Gromit refused to trot, and I could see that he was a little off in his right rear leg. A panic call to Dr. Sherman resulted in his reassurance that it couldn't be a back problem at this late date. He recommended cutting back on the exercise for a few days and see what happened. Within a few days Gromit started acting afraid to go in the road for our now shortened walks, and I was still seeing intermittent lameness. On Labor Day, we made an 'emergency' trip to Raleigh, where Dr. Sherman diagnosed achilles tendonitis. His prescription was to ice Gromit's hock for five minutes three times daily for two days, then to ultrasound the hock for seven minutes daily for eight days, discontinue this for a week, then do five minute daily ultrasound treatments for another eight days. Walking was cut back to 15 minutes twice daily, with no trotting.

I was able to locate a therapeutic (as opposed to diagnostic) ultrasound unit for a one -month rental, and initially saw significant improvement. After a week, though, Gromit's lameness returned and the next day he was worse than ever. I was in despair until I discovered one of his toes was slightly swollen and there was a pinpoint area on his pad oozing pus. He had gotten another toe pad puncture, and it was infected. Within a day of starting antibiotics, Gromit was moving normally. I decided we weren't going to walk in the road any more. Avoiding another pad injury was worth the inconvenience of traveling to a safer place to exercise.

When the ultrasound protocol was completed, we went back to the other exercises and slowly rebuilt Gromit's walking, and then trotting, time. When I could work it in, I took him to a nearby pond, wanting to use swimming to build his shoulder muscles. This wasn't particularly productive. While he loved playing in the water, Gromit pretty much refused to actually swim.

In mid-October Dr. Sherman gave Gromit the okay to start hopping (as opposed to stepping) over his circle of little jumps. A weighted (three pounds to start, working up to five pounds) backpack was to be worn during a portion of his walks. The distance between pylons for the serpentine was decreased to 18 inches, and Gromit got to wear little 'charm bracelets' on his legs to change the way he picked up his feet while doing the serpentines. We also added some stretches for his back and abdominal muscles.

By the end of that month, Dr. Regina Schwabe had completed construction on her Pamplin Animal Wellness Services (PAWS) building, which included a wonderful indoor pool, so we started going there once a week for 'swimming lessons'. Dr. Schwabe has the patience of a saint, and spent hours working with Gromit. As in the local pond, he enjoyed splashing around in the water, but had a panic attack when his feet could no longer touch bottom. After five weeks, though he no longer fought it (much), he still hated swimming, so Dr. Schwabe and I decided swim therapy was not the right thing for this dog. ***My next dog will be taught to swim as a puppy.*** While at PAWS, though, Gromit was introduced to the treadmill, which he really enjoyed. This struck me as the perfect way to build his stamina without tearing up his feet or having to deal with uncomfortable weather conditions. He could trot much faster than with me on the other end of the leash and could do

Paws To Dance is published four times a year, in February, May, August and November.

Deadlines are the 25th of the preceding month. DEADLINE for the next issue is January 25, 2004. So Please! Try to be timely.

Editor

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The contents of Paws To Dance represent the opinions of the authors, not necessarily those of CFF. WE ARE LOOKING FOR A CO-EDITOR. If you are interested, please let us know.

very controlled uphill work with a treadmill. I was able to find a used machine with the features we needed, and had it delivered to my office.

Our November visit to VetHab was a landmark one. For the first time in six months Gromit was allowed to run! Three times a week I was to take him somewhere with a smooth, level surface and short, dry grass for a series of ten 50-200 yard sprints. Fortunately, there are soccer complexes near my house and office fitting the criteria perfectly. If the sprints went well, after a week he could start jumping twice weekly, gradually building up to the 22 inch jump height required for obedience competition.

For a few months Gromit had been doing those obedience exercises I thought would not stress his back - heeling, signals, scent discrimination, moving stand, etc. He had done well in the October CFF show, and had enjoyed being out in public again. He was thrilled at being allowed to run and retrieve at speed, and by New Year's was jumping 20 inches effortlessly. At this point I started sending in entries for the early season shows. I had decided to only enter the Utility class for a while - the probability of Gromit making an awkward jump is lower in Utility than in Open, the points available are higher, and it is easier to win. Thankfully, it occurred to me at some point that we had done no jumping anywhere other than the RDOC building for nine months. Outside was too messy for jumping more than 12 inches, but I was able to find some matches in the DC area to attend.

At the first match on January 5, I was incredibly tense, with a totally predictable effect on my dog. We muddled through the first four exercises, but than Gromit refused the first jump. I got him over it after lowering the height to 16 inches, but knew 'we' had a problem, and it wasn't 'him'. After stopping on the way home at the club building, where he jumped perfectly, I was totally convinced that my fear had caused the refusal. However, just to be sure, On January 7 we went to PAWS for a second opinion from Dr. Schwabe. As expected (hoped!), she could find no problems - Gromit was in excellent physical condition.

Since we had achieved our rehabilitation goals, and because I needed more time for actual obedience training, at this point Gromit's physical training went into maintenance mode. I eliminated the serpentines but kept the circle cavaletti, cutting back to once daily. I also started rotating trotting and sprinting days through the week, with a session of one or the other daily. The time this freed up we used for polishing competition skills and seeking out safe places for Gromit to do directed jumping.

Our performance was improved at the next couple of matches, but I still wasn't happy with Gromit's jumping. When we were alone, he was perfect, but with other people around he was hesitating and stutter-stepping on his approach. I knew the cause was my emotional state, but needed further validation, so we made another trip down to VetHab. Dr.

Sherman could find no evidence of back pain, and showed me a nifty little exercise to improve Gromit's timing and my confidence. He set up a series of five 14-inch jumps at right angles to each other, very close together in a zig-zag pattern. There was no room for even one stride between the jumps. Gromit had to bounce the entire series, but because the jumps were angled, the distance between them varied. This requires exceptional flexibility of the back and abdominal muscles, as well as really good timing. Seeing my dog master this in less than five passes finally completely convinced me that his body was fine. Now I just had to fix my head.

We didn't attend the first five trials I had entered as I worked on my mental game. Michele Gillette mixed up a magic potion of several Bach Flower Essences which was extremely helpful in eliminating the fears I felt in public. Another aid to my attitude adjustment came from a totally unexpected source. I ran into a former classmate from veterinary school at a continuing education meeting - a guy from a rural background who had gone into a farm practice. After hearing what I had been up to the past several months, his comment was 'Gee, you must win a ton of money at these obedience trials'. Of course, I laughed, but his off-the-cuff remark stayed with me. Why was I doing this? For money? - not. Power? - no way. A piece of paper from the AKC? - anyone can make one on a home computer these days. Fame and glory? - at best, limited to an extremely small circle. I was doing this for the joy of participating in a team sport with a partner I adore, for that rush of adrenaline that occurs as we're about to step into the ring, for the thrill of showing my peers what a wonderful dog I have. A goal is necessary to motivate me to do my best, but the journey is more important than the destination.

With my head finally in the right place, I couldn't wait to get back in the obedience ring with Gromit, and eagerly anticipated the March 1 & 2 Winston-Salem shows. My only goal was for my dog to be happy and look good in the ring. That trip turned into quite an adventure, since an ice storm had knocked out the electricity for 80% of the NC Triad region, but that's another story entirely. Suffice to say, the power came on at the show site in time for Gromit to jump safely (i.e., not in the dark), so we showed in Utility B and achieved my goal - he looked great and we both had a wonderful time. I was thrilled when we won second place (4 points, total now 93), but the real fun was just being there after being out of it for a year. I had entered Rally on Saturday, just to have something to do in case I wimped out of showing in Utility again. Thanks to Karen McKnight's class at RDOC, I knew what all the signs meant, and we won the advanced class. Sunday's class was not as good - we had a substantial deduction on the moving stand that knocked us out of the placements, but directed jumping was Gromit's best exercise. I was pleased with the weekend overall.

Following a very successful performance at the March CFF competition (where Gromit retired the President's Challenge Trophy for Highest Artistic Score) were the Tarheel shows. Thursday we got another second (4 points), Friday a third (2 points), didn't show Saturday, Sunday fourth (0 points). Our total now stood at 99 points. We had great fun both in and out of the ring, visiting with people we hadn't seen in ages, shopping at vendors, eating at good restaurants, and generally relaxing.

I had entered several outdoor trials in April, knowing I might have to pull from any given show if the footing in the ring was bad. But I love showing outside and couldn't pass up the chance to go and catch up with another set of friends. The first of the April trials was Chesapeake Kennel Club in southern Maryland. The weather was iffy, and I became one of those obnoxious exhibitors who check in at the last minute. But the rain held off and Gromit showed well. With a small entry, our second place was only worth two points, but that was enough. Two days short of the first anniversary of his back surgery, Gromit became an Obedience Trial Champion! (Coincidentally, our judge that day was the same one who was judging at the DOTC-MD trial in March '02 - Thank you, Nancy Withers.)

So it has been a great spring, made even sweeter by the contrast with a year ago. As of this writing, we have shown in 14 Utility B classes, qualifying in all of them and placing in ten. Although there were numerous occasions during the year when I had felt like giving up, Gromit's unwav-

ering willingness and acceptance of every challenge put before him had kept me going. This dog is truly special!

Our future plans are nebulous. We continue a fairly rigorous exercise regimen, consisting of daily circle and zig-zag cavaletti, twice weekly sprints, trotting sessions with and without weights on non-sprint days, full height jumping twice a week, and uphill treadmill work three days a week. Gromit will not be resuming his agility career, as I had once planned. We will not be campaigning to achieve national rankings, but will continue to show occasionally in obedience just for fun, perhaps even entering the Open class again some day. Tracking and herding are on the agenda, and we continue to seek the elusive Freestyle Champion title. Maybe someday I will no longer have a panic attack whenever my dog stubs a toe or stands crookedly.

And More Guild News

Sirius Guild

On October 4th at the Alexandria, VA show, history was made! Two of our members' dogs achieved the titled of CFF Champion becoming the first every. Congratulations to Carol Maupin and her Belgian Tervuren, Chase and to Betty Swenson and her Border Collie, Gromit.

As the year draws to a close, freestyle classes continue to be offered by obedience clubs in the area. We are exploring the possibly of holding an adjudicated match early in the year. We are looking for volunteers to help with the Rockville Show in March, 2004. If you are in the D.C., Maryland, Virginia or North Carolina area and would like to help e-mail SiriusGuild@aol.com.

In the coming year the Guild also hopes to find a way to make the members feel more connected and to set up a more structured organization. Suggestions and help are needed and welcome. Contact SiriusGuild@aol.com

Here's wishing everyone a Happy Holiday Season.



A Recipe To Teach Backing By Carol Maupin

Take one curious puppy,
Add an active caterpillar,
Make sure that the caterpillar is walking toward the puppy,
Wait.

The puppy will start to back as the caterpillar goes between his legs.

You can click, say yes. or simply laugh.

Unfortunately caterpillars are harder to train than puppies.

Note: Consumption of the caterpillar ends the training and the fun.

Especially for the caterpillar.



Dogged by Sheep - A Freestyle Tale

by Alison Jaskiewicz, Mason, NH

In late June I was asked to do freestyle demos for the Grand Opening of a new training center, American K-9 Country, nearby in Amherst, New Hampshire. This was just the push I needed, as I've been wanting to find a new piece of music for Kepler, my six year old Bernese Mountain Dog. We have been training some new movements and movement combinations which he enjoys immensely. Just five weeks before the late July demos was tight, but I thought I could have a routine roughed in by then.

Step 1: Music

My husband, Tom, is very good with music and with his help we found a great piece which matched Kep's trotting rhythm in just a few days. Plus, the music had good phrasing to help with choreography.

Step 2: Choreography

I listened to the music A LOT. I walked and doodled with the music in my 40 X 50 performance space, roughing in ideas, then added Kepler. Sometimes the timing worked, sometimes it didn't. We doodled together till movement phrasing clicked with the music. Several times Kepler offered his own ideas on choreography. This is part of the fun for dogs in freestyle - they get to contribute. Much of this was done at once a week sessions at the training center. We completed our choreography with a week and half to go.

Step 3: The Big Day

The performance was scheduled for early evening. We arrived early so I could help prepare and set out food for the evening. Kepler was settled in the air conditioned day care area. As we chatted and cut up cheese, sliced melons, and poured chips I had an unexpected surprise. The herding demo scheduled right before us was INSIDE! I had naively assumed it would be outside.

Step 4: Sheep

After two hours to absorb the news, panic and then regroup, I watched a wonderful herding demo. Five sheep, doing what sheep do with great regularity, guided flawlessly around the ring by a Border Collie directed only by whistles. While the ring was being swept and mopped, the sheep were penned in the back corner, 40 - 50 feet behind our performance space. Yes indeed, the sheep got to stay for the freestyle!

Step 5: Here We Go

Trust my dog. Trust my training, Trust my dog, Trust my training. As we walked down the hall toward the training room Kep's nose rose higher and higher. My pockets were well stocked with cheese and I was prepared to perform with food in each hand if necessary. As I entered the ring and dropped off the leash I gave Kep some food to re-engage his attention. After a few more pieces he was focused on me. I popped a few more pieces in my mouth and we set ourselves up to start, standing and facing each other. Our eyes were locked.

Step 6: Baaaaaaa . . .

"Our music begins and we start our in-place pivots facing each other. So far so good, we're past the slow section and ready to move out. Wow! Kep is right on, even through the first of his newest movements. But, I have to stay focused. This routine is new for me too. We arrived at the back of the ring for the second slow section. Baaaaa! Baaaa! The sheep started to talk! Kep's eyes and head flicked, but re-engaged. Now I was **really** focused. Only about half a minute to go. Side step, spin, side step, side step, front, pause, spin, pause, twist, sit, paws up. We did it!!! " We made it through almost three minutes of concentration without any food rewards, although you can be sure I was prasing him and encouraging him the whole time. What a dog! Kepler earned LOTS of treats and LOTS of loving back in the air conditioning.

Step 6: In Review

A friend video taped the routine for me. Watching the tape later that evening I was amazed at how much the sheep baaa'ed. They voiced their presence during the last minute and fifteen seconds, almost half of our performance. I hadn't even heard the first half minute of baa'ing during the performance and Kep didn't act like he did either. We both tuned them out for the last part too. Mind you, these sheep didn't baa once during the herding demo! The folks watching the sheep said they talked whenever Kep was in clear sight. I guess they liked what they saw! They certainly helped prove the value of interactive attention. Losing ourselves equally in our focus on each other, the sheep lost any potential to be truly distracting. As for me, I am so proud that Kep, a highly prey driven dog, was such a great partner when dogged by sheep!

PS Kep repeated his freestyle the next day, followed by a carting demo culminating in lots of cart rides for the smaller children. Many people commented on his smile and wagging tail throughout all the demos. Thanks Kep. I was smiling too.

PSS American K-9 Country is a wonderful new training center. The high ceiling, fully matted training room is 100 X 180 feet, with no pillars! Perfect for freestyle.



The Joy of Canine Freestyle

By Susanna Pathak

I often thank my lucky stars that I had a chance to discover canine freestyle so early in Dash's performance career. He was just over a year old and doing well in competition obedience classes at the Richmond Dog Obedience Club (RDOC). He had earned his CGC at 10 months and was training for TDI. Eager to develop a solid foundation of obedience with Dash, I had him in classes continuously from the age of 5 months.

I was working on obtaining member at RDOC. As one of my requirements of membership, I assisted the Saturday morning freestyle class. Ann (the instructor) said it was fine that I bring Dash along to these Saturday classes.

I found each of those Saturday morning classes amazing. Students, most of them beginners, were introduced to basic freestyle concepts of space, rhythm, choreography and music. As a group, they were shown technical skills such as trotting the dog, backing, spins, and other special freestyle moves. They were shown attention games and how to work on timing and rewards. The approach was positive and upbeat. The process was creative and fun! Often, Ann played some music and then asked each handler and dog to perform a study, such as a 30 second routine in a spiral pattern or moving the dog in an "x" pattern using the entire 40 by 50 foot performance space. Classmates are essential to the development of a freestyle team.

Often as I watched a dog and handler team working to the music, I felt the joy of their interaction. The magic of freestyle is there in that partnership between the handler and the dog as they work together. It is something that very much has to be seen to be understood. The beauty, grace and athleticism of the dogs are showcased in CFF style routines. The handler is there to support the dog and help his distinctive virtues shine. When you love a dog and train a dog you develop a special bond that is strengthened though your training journey.

A year and a half later, Dash and I are a Team in that Saturday morning freestyle class. We usually spend time choreographing our individual routines, adding and refining a little bit each week until a few weeks before a competition. Often the dogs assists with the actual choreographing and will throw in moves or insist on doing a turn his way. Usually when a dog does this, he/she is right—it looks better their way. That's a big part of the joy of freestyle, I'd say. There is a lot of room for creativity and input from the dog in Freestyle.

Looking for a Fun Vacation with Your Best Furry Friend?

Plans are now underway for the second CFF Retreat and Membership Meeting on June 24-27, 2004. For those of you who attended the first one two years ago, you will be pleased to know that the Felicite Latane Animal Sanctuary in Mebane, NC, will again be the site for the Retreat. This site is in a country setting, has air-conditioned, large meeting rooms, and plenty of parking. The caterer that provided the food two years ago will again cater this Retreat—that's reason enough to attend!

Tentative plans include two full days of classes ranging in length from 30 minutes to 1 ¾ hours, a wine and cheese hour preceding the Membership Meeting Friday evening, and an adjudication match (judges make comments but do not award scores) Sunday morning. Previous and current co-chairs Marge Hetrick and I are still brainstorming possible class topics but know that they will include classes for both the beginning freestyler and the more advanced. Again we will offer choreography and technical training at both levels, as well as classes on selecting music, attention, clicker, and canine bodywork and/or anatomy. One popular instructor has offered a class on making heeling fun which is one of a number of new topics we hope to offer.

Because we want to encourage the attendance again of people who participated in our first Retreat, we are anxious to offer new classes as well as repeat some of the others. Please, PLEASE let us know what YOU would like to see offered as a class. You may contact Kay Richards care of this newsletter or Mary Sullivan at blkdogtrainer@aol.com or at 301-587-9212. We can't offer what you would like, if we don't know what it is.

Watch this newsletter and the website for upcoming information about when and how to register for this great weekend.

Alexandria Show Results, October 4, 2003,
Listed in chronological order of placement 1st
through 4th place.



South Dakota, November 1, 2003, Listed in
chronological order of placement 1st through
4th place.

Level I Team

Ruff Striders from Pittsburgh, PA area: Music:
American Patrol

Level I Single Dog and Handler Team

- 1) Shelley Caldwell and Prairie Pine's Quick Silver,
Rough Collie; Music: Mozart, Titled
- 2) Doris Lazenby and Shadeko's Wind B Neth My
Wings. Doberman; Music: Goldfinger
- 3) Terry Youkins and Airecraft Red Riley's Revenge,
Airedale Terrier; Music: Isn't She Lovely

Level II Single Dog and Handler Team

- 1) Barbara Schick and Elf Saddle Allspice, Welsh
Corgi; Music: Bumble Boogie, Titled
- 2) Jeanine Brown and Trapper, Brittany; Music:
Secret Love, Titled
- 3) Julia Gregory and McLea's Bashful Bombur, Car
digan Welsh Corgi; Music: Simple Gifts, Titled
- 4) Mary Jane Zarnowski and Wil-Mar's Yankee Clip
per, Norwegian Elkhound; Music: Jazz Pizzicato,
Titled

Pepper Guzman and May Be FSBO, CD
and

Marilyn Sanders and Buckwheat's Roadrunner
also Titled

Level IV Single Dog and Handler Team

- 1) Carol Maupin and Jamaica Hot Pursuit, Belgian
Tervuren; Music: The Cider House Rules
- 2) Betty Swenson and Wildfire's Wrong Trousers,
Border Collie; Music: Sail On
- 3) Marge Hetrick and Cadenza Candlelight,
Standard Poodle; Music: Jesu, Joy of Man's
Desiring Titled
- 4) Darla Jackson Paganini and Stone Patch Drew,
Labrador Retriever; Music: Bergeret

Veterans

- 1) Brandy Clymire and Buckingham's Hey Presto,
Cavalier King Charles Spaniel; Music: Flop Eared
Mule

A Title is awarded when the dog and handler team
score equals 65 or better.

Level I, Single Dog and Handler Team

- 1) Karen (Kay) Bedeau and Fallon Token O'Fancy TD
Irish Setter, Music: Walkin' with Dad, Wilson &
McKee
- 2) Patty Andersen and Dakota's Black Gold, Miniature
Schnauzer Music: Jazz Legato, Leroy Anderson
- 3) Cindy Davies and Ace, Pembroke Welsh Corgi,
Music: Syncopated Clock, Leroy Anderson.

Level II, Single Dog and Handler Team

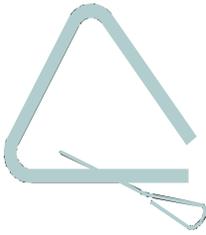
- 1) Karen Benzon and U-AGI Smack-Dab's Sky
Dancer, AX AXJ EAC EJC EGC TN-N CGC Dober
man Pinscher Music: Eclectic Blue, Chip Davis,
Titled
- 2) Debbie Davenport and Valimar's Razzle Dazzle,
CDX, English Springer Spaniel, Music: In the Mood
Garland/Razaf, Glenn Miller, Titled
- 3) Dawn Madge and Dawn's Yankee Doodle Danny
CDX, Dachshund, Music: All Shook up, Elvis
Presley, Titled
- 4) Renee Ponzio and Charlie Is My Darling, Miniature
Schnauzer, Music: Jazz Pizzicato, Leroy Anderson.

Level II --Team

- 1) Karen Benzon and U-AGII Smack-Dab's High
Flying Cirrus VCD1 MX MXJ EAC EJC EGC TN-O
TG-N CGC Doberman Pinscher
and
Kay Bedeau and CH OTCH U-UD Bentree Token's
Iceman Cometh UDX JH AX AXJ VC Irish Setter,
Music: Pink Panther, Henry Mancini, Titled

Level III Single Dog and Handler Team

- 1) Dawn Madge and LK's Dawn's Early Light MS,
Dachshund, Music: Sandpaper Ballet, Leroy Ander-
son, Titled
- 2) Karen Benxon and U-AGII Smack-Dab's High,
Flying Cirrus VCD1 MX MXJ EAC EJC EGC TN-O
TG-N CGC, Doberman Pinscher, Music: Gypsy,
Ronan Hardiman, Titled
- 3) Karen (Kay) Bedeau and CH OTCH U-UD Bentree
Token's Iceman Cometh UDX JH AX AXJ VC, Irish
Setter, Music: Oh! Pee Wee Hunt.
- 4) Peggy Behrens and Kayla, Mixed Breed, Music:
Plink Plank Plunk, Leroy Anderson



The Apex of the Triangle by Julia M. Gregory

Julia's partner is a seven-year-old Cardigan Welsh Corgi named Bombur. They have been indulging in freestyle since January 2003. They practice with the freestyle group (guild wannabes) of the Obedience Club of Chattanooga in Tennessee. Julia and Bombur recently competed for the first time at the CFF show in Alexandria, Virginia.

The time: summer 2003. When I saw the October 4th CFF show announcement on the listserve, I suddenly knew where I was in the freestyle universe. I was standing at the base of a tall triangle laid out to the horizon. At the apex of the triangle shone a light – October 4th, our goal. Here at the base of the triangle, there was plenty of elbow room and much to choose from. I could train new moves. I could consider clothing. October was a long time away. Many people helped me, here at the base of the triangle. Our routine underwent several changes.

As I traveled the path that led to the apex of the triangle, my choices became more limited, my space more constrained. No new moves! This works. Concentrate on it! Clean up what we've trained and get ENERGY into that movement! The sides of the triangle were closing in on me! October wasn't so very far away now.

I can honestly say that during the last month before the show, every moment I didn't spend in some essential activity like driving the car, I spent thinking about and preparing our routine. I tried to visualize the entire show experience. I made lists of what to pack. We never missed a morning of roadwork. I walked the routine a hundred times and visualized it whenever I could. Then came October 3rd and it was time to drive to Virginia.

October 4: When I arrived at the show site, which I had visited earlier in the day to familiarize both of us with the smells, sounds and sights, I began to follow my detailed schedule. 5:00 – set up crate and chair. 5:15 – ask if my CD is correctly labeled. 5:30 – last grooming and so on. These lists and schedules are my security blanket. A small monkey wrench was thrown into my works when a friend from Arkansas showed up completely unannounced to “see what I do.” Now I had an unexpected someone who would require attention. On the flip side, now I had someone to run my video camera ... ah, balance regained. The last hour, including the performance is truly a blur. My vision narrowed to a spot directly in front of me, with a hazy nimbus around the edge. I repeated my mantra often, “Breathe. Focus. Breathe. Relax. Breathe. Smile. Breathe. Visualize. Breathe. Heel!” I changed clothes, walked Bombur, paced the hall and at the last minute, remembered to pick up my armband. The wait for the judges to finish scoring the team before me seemed terribly long. I struggled to strike a balance between charging up my dog and making him as crazy with nerves as I was. Finally, the signal to go! As we moved into the ring to honor the judges, I felt as if a familiar, comfortable blanket had been dropped across my shoulders. Here was something we knew how to do! We had done this together dozens of times. It was going to be all right. We established our opening shape. As our beloved music started, my little dog reached down deep inside himself, turned my terror into his energy and gave me the most animated performance of his year-long freestyle career. Together we had leapt from the apex of the triangle and for two and a half minutes, we flew. Granted, there were small bumbles, but since the only mistake that can be made on stage is to admit that a mistake has been made, I won't delineate them here. Besides, they were just minor pockets of turbulence in our flight. We dipped and glided, now apart, now together, each always in concert with the other, flying over familiar territory.

Now that I could relax, I really enjoyed all the other teams' performances. I was breathless when we titled and placed. I was held transfixed by the beauty of the level IV performances. What a night! Every single person at the show was kind and helpful to me. No one patronized me for being a beginner even though I felt very green. Even though I was on the backside of the triangle, I could still see and feel the flow.

Now I stand at the base of another long triangle. The glint of light at the top is the First Florida Freestyle Guild show to be held next Valentine's Day. Bombur and I are part of a multiple dog team that hopes to compete for the first time on that day. We're using all this elbow room down here, choosing shoes, counting measures, standardizing hand signals. Based on my first and happy experience competing in freestyle, I'm glad to be here at the beginning of what promises to be another rich road to the apex of the triangle.

Thank You Dances with Woofs Guild
You have that "Feel Good, Got to have it, Want to
be there, Feeling!"
By Kay Richards

I knew there was something special about South Dakota the moment the plane landed. Yes, the lay of the land was different from any place I had ever visited--but when I think back on the weekend of "The First" "Dances with Woofs CFF Show", I realize that there was something even more special about Rapid City, South Dakota.

From the time Joan Tennille and I stepped into the Happy Tails Dog Training Center, it was obvious that the red carpet had been put down. Everyone was busy working effortlessly. It was truly amazing how the people worked—like the running of a smooth clock. The Freestyle performances were more than very good. They left me with a feeling of wonder/hope and yes-- I cried. I was amazed at the quality of the performances. It was obvious that they had worked hard and loved what they were revealing.

But I think the peak of the Rapid City "Dances with Woofs Guild" Show was the people. I can't remember when I felt so relaxed and at ease. Everyone was friendly, open, caring and sharing. After lunch (which was extremely good) we sat around and just talked. I felt I had known these people forever.

Sunday after the Work Shop, Dawn Madge took me and Julia Gregory (who had driven from Tennessee) to Mt. Rushmore. It was getting late--but we managed to see the President's faces etched into the side of the mountain. We stayed for the illumination. As the faces came alive with the light, the snow came down like glitter. It was magical. Thank you Dawn!

Joan and I left S. Dakota on a white carpet (6 inches of snow). And I felt a renewed sense of Joyfulness for Canine Freestyle. Thank you! Dances with Woofs Guild for sharing you love of Freestyle. It was a pleasure to have Judged your Show! I am so very proud of you all!

From the Treasurer

2004Renewals

Dues for 2004 are now due! (If the lower right corner of the mailing label on this newsletter shows Exp: 12/31/03) Dues are \$ 20.00

Please send dues to: Brandy Clymire, 9020 Isle of Laurels, Spotsylvania, VA 22553



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